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W. L. A.

An Essay, on
Rheumatism
by
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of
Maricetta
Lancaster County
Pennsylvania.

Copy of the
H. J. H.

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It can scarcely be expected that much new matter can be advanced relating to a disease like Rheumatism. The principal object of this essay is therefore to offer, in some form, a few of the best opinions which have been advanced on the subject, together with some observations of my own, and to advert to some of the best known remedies for a disease, which, in spite of our extensive resources, often baffles the skill of the most experienced.

Of Acute Rheumatism.

Rheumatism, in its acute stage or form, is as much a part of the Phlogmasia, a purely inflammatory disease, but in its nature, appears to be sui generis, differing in its leading characteristics from the genuine Phlogmonous inflammation, and still more from the Erysipelatous, although like this latter, the only favourable termination is that of resolution.

The principal difference between Rheumatism

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as the two species of inflammation above specified, appears to be, that the Rheumatic, is always seated in the fibrous structures of the body; as the periosteum, dura mater, the muscular coats of the tubes, and fibres of the body generally. It is somewhat partial in its place of location, being found mostly to affect the larger joints, and those parts but sparingly covered with muscle. Perhaps the want of this natural covering rendering them more liable to exposure; or these joints from their frequent motion; are, along with the other causes of debility, rendered more pre-disposed to take on the disease.

We also find that inflammation differs much as regards its seat in the different tissues; and thus the same disease may produce different appearances, symptoms &c. as seated in different tissues. We see too that the effects of medicines, many of which act by producing irritation

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inflammation,) on these tissues, is as different
 out; - for Ipecacuanha or Antimony introduced
 into the cellular membrane of the thigh or arm,
 will produce very different effects from what they
 when applied to the mucous tissues; and it may
 be in this manner many of our medicines act
 specifically. The same exciting causes would prob-
 ably in a young and vigorous constitution, un-
 impaired by previous disease, or an intemperate
 life produce a healthy phlegmonous inflammation,
 or inflammatory fever; while in a person of ad-
 vanced years and whose constitution has been
 shattered by a dissolute and debauched life, or
 continued hardships and privations, we would
 have that peculiar inflammation denominated
 Rheumatic, affecting the fibrous structures,
 and perhaps at times the heads of the bones.
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The symptoms of acute Rheumatism are, pain in one or more of the joints, sometimes affecting every joint and part of the body, obliging the patient to lie on his back with the limbs extended, and incapable of moving them or having moved without excruciating pain. In violent cases of this kind we generally have fever from the commencement of the attack, with a full, frequent and hard pulse, even in the emaciated. The fever is generally highest in the evening, and a remission takes place in the morning, the patient being often much relieved by a universal sweat. The urine is high coloured, and deposits a copious sediment. Through the day he is less troubled with pains, which however are more or less severe according to the state of the weather. After they have

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continued some short time, they are succeeded by swelling of the parts affected, and some degree of oedema. These often bring some relief to the pains, but they always return, and are generally the last symptoms which leave the patient, who is but little relieved by the departure of the fever.

Rheumatic may be distinguished from universal pains by their being aggravated on a change of weather from dry to damp &c. - the latter being also rendered worse at night time by the weight ^{and warmth} of the bed clothes; and remit or are absent during the day, whereas the former are generally relieved while in bed. When the disease affects but one or two parts and is liable to shift, the prognosis is more favourable than when the pains are more universal and fixed; but that is mostly to be collected from the constitution and former

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bits of the patient, with the state of the febrile symptoms &c. A profuse sweating often proves highly beneficial: particularly when the urine at the same time turbid, and deposits a viscid sediment. A diarrhoea supervening is also afforded great relief. In general we must not expect too much from it, but would in a measure check it. There is an intimate connexion subsisting between Rheumatism and the acute affections of the alimentary canal. It is frequently combined with Dysentery, which has been considered by some as a Rheumatic state of the bowels; but I think the nature of these two inflammations essentially different.

The causes of Rheumatism are similar to those of our inflammatory complaints, often affecting persons of the same habit and manner of life. The gout, to which it frequently bears a great

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relation. We see it also prevalent in low situations and in the neighbourhood of marshes, subject to Intermittent fever; and the patient is often from his debilitated state after an attack of this fever, much afflicted with Rheumatic pains, which are mostly of the chronic form. It is on this account, as well as to prevent a recurrence of the Intermittent: the more advisable to continue the tonic remedies for some time after the patient is free from attacks of the fever. I have seen, Intermittent fever run insensibly into Rheumatism, which became as regularly Intermittent as the fever had been. A use of mercury, if it does not produce its own peculiar pains, is apt to predispose the system to those of a Rheumatic nature; and yet mercury is among the remedies for a cure of the disease, even when these induce. A sanguine temperament and full habit sum-

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ways favourable to the production of Rheumatism. — a cold and variable climate is also favourable to it, and a partial exposure to a current of air, when the body is heated, is particularly so — as also lying in or wearing damp linen &c.

The use of Bark has been supposed by some to be another cause of Rheumatism; but it probably only acts as an exciting cause when an inflammatory diathesis, or a tendency to acute Rheumatism exists. A course of Mercury always produces a disposition to cold: — probably its debilitating effects on the system, predispose it to take on that particular disease, which has been termed Mercurial Rheumatism.

In the treatment of acute Rheumatism, considering it in the light we do, the antiphlogistic remedies will be first demanded, to a greater or less extent according to the attending circumstances; but as there is not that

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tendency to suppuration which exists in most of the Phlegmasia, our depletory remedies need not be carried so far. Much will depend upon the constitution and former habits of our patients. With one at the age of forty or fifty, who has lived a dissipated and debauched life, and whose system requires a certain quantity of stimuli in order to keep it in a due state of excitement, we cannot push our depletory measures so far as in a young a vigorous patient, in whom depletion to a sufficient extent to make a decided impression on the inflammatory diathesis need not be dreaded. Indeed the nature of Phlegmatism is such, that it is neither essential nor admissible to push the general evacuations till the local pains are altogether relieved. Blood-letting is, however, indicated in a majority of cases, and we must carry it to an extent consistent with the circumstances

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 exhibits a more or less inflammatory appearance;
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 marks - "It is in inflammation of the fibrous
 textures of the body that the greatest quantity of
 fibrin is found in the blood: for example, in
 inflammation of the heart when blood is drawn,
 we meet with the strongest example of the buffy
 coat, and next probably in acute Rheumatism:
 He is also of opinion that under such circum-
 stances, the fibrin, instead of being distributed
 to the fibrous textures, as usual in health, remain
 except in the blood.

The blood is some times denser or contains more
 red globules, immediately under the buffy coat,
 than it does at the bottom of the vessel into
 which it is drawn. This does not exactly cor-
 respond with Mr Hunter's theory of coagulation,
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the greatest ~~proportion~~ of red globules at the bottom of the vessel, or a regular shade from the bottom to the surface, the colour there being lightest; the red particles being ^{many of the} heaviest parts of the mass, sink from their greater specific gravity, and proportionably to their different sizes. — (The above appearance of the blood Mr Hunter has endeavoured to explain by the more free escape of the carbonic acid gas; and more speedy coagulation of the blood near the surface. When bleeding is prohibited by the nature of the circumstances, we may prescribe some active cathartic with a view to reduce action. The fact of Rheumatism being often suspended and even cured by a diarrhoea, spontaneously induced, has led some practitioners to imitate the cure of nature, by active and continued purging. This practice is often followed by the best results, but as a general rule the drastic purgatives are not

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to be employed in the treatment of this disease.
 Mild cathartics are in all cases proper. They
 remove the source of intestinal irritation, and
 tend to equalize the circulation, and lessen the
 action of the heart and arteries by their evac-
 uant effects upon the extreme vessels of the intestines.
 As an auxiliary they can seldom be neglected
 with propriety in acute Rheumatism. Nitrous
 Disorders will also answer a good purpose.
 The German Physicians are much in the
 habit of prescribing Muriate of Ammonia, in-
 stead of Nitric in acute Rheumatic affections.
 After the inflammatory symptoms are
 subdued, and we have pushed our evacuating
 remedies as far as we wish, there is perhaps no
 remedy of greater utility than the Colchicum
 Autumnale. The modus operandi of this
 article is supposed by Dr S. Jackson to
 be by producing an artificial inflammation

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a peculiar action on the Lymphatics, acting on principle of reculsion. Whether this be correct or not, we are certain that the affection of the limb is often thrown on the intestines and reversely; and by this translation the original disease is for the time or even permanently relieved. We would rather, however attribute the good effects of the Colchicum in the present instance, to its action on the kidneys, and system generally. As bad effect have already resulted from an improper use of it, some caution is necessary in administering it. A combination of Peruvian Bark and Colchicum forms a very good prescription, and is much employed in the New-house practice of this City. The Bark alone, especially where the disease is of a remittent or periodical nature is our best remedy, after evacuations have been premised. Haygarth says that Bark is ~~inferior~~ Rheumatism is only inferior

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Diaphoretics may do much good, when sweating is easily induced, but when this is difficult to bring about, violent measures will not be attended with any good effect. Dover's powder or some preparation with Camphor are found to answer best; and the patient may drink at the same time freely a warm decoction of the Eupatorium perfoliatum. Should we find the Dover's powder too stimulating, or to afford no relief, we may substitute Calomel and Nitro.

Emetics where the disease originates in low damp situations, and assumes an Intermittent form, attended with nausea, will be advisable in the commencement; and after inflammatory action is subdued, Bark and opium will be the proper remedies, if they are not found to aggravate the disease. Bark, if given immediately after the first evacuations, will be apt to produce harm.

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stiffness and dull pain of the joints will be relieved by frictions with turpentine, Camphor &c. Where the pains are confined to one or other of the extremities, it will derive advantage from local bleeding and blisters. Great benefit has also been derived from the application of Tartar Emetic ointment. If we could rely on the statements of our patients we would be led to conclude that this ointment, when suffered to remain on a considerable time will often produce its peculiar eruption on parts to which it never had been directly applied. I have seen it appear on the scrotum, perineum, and in the armpits, when the plaster was only applied to the breast.

Persons afflicted with Rheumatism should always wear flannel next the skin, and when it is of a chronic form, they should accustom themselves to wear it throughout the year. The diet in the first or inflammatory stage should be the

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same as in other inflammatory complaints; but in the last stage, it should be more generous and nourishing with a moderate allowance of porter or wine.

Lumbago is that variety of Rheumatism affecting the muscles and parts about the loins, and is sometimes mistaken for Nephritis, but may be distinguished from it by many of the symptoms attendant on the latter being absent.

Sciatica or Rheumatism of the hip-joint is another variety and like the former, is more apt to assume the chronic form than when seated in the extremities. - Being confined to their respective parts, we are to depend more upon local remedies. Turpentine has been much recommended, both internally and as a friction.

The Pleura and Diaphragm are sometimes thought to be affected with Rheumatic inflammation; but it would be difficult to distinguish it from common Pleuritis or Diaphragmitis.

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This is the less to be regretted as the treatment indicated will be very similar in either case. There is generally less fever and pain upon exposure in Rheumatic affection, and the pain is so constant or acute.

Mercurial Rheumatism is often induced by exposure and an improper use of mercury, and is apt to assume the chronic form. It would be prudent when our patient cannot be closely confined within doors, while under the use of mercury, not to debilitate the system too much by other anti-inflammatory measures, thus predisposing the system to take on cold. This syrup of Guaiacum is particularly adapted to this form of Rheumatism; and we should always suspect it to be of a Syphilitic taint whenever we observe suspicious looking ulcers along with the pains. The good effects of this syrup are to be attributed to the sarsaparilla and very minute doses of

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erosive. Sublimate which it contains.

It is ⁱⁿ some particular cases of the above description which Swain's Panacea has done so much good. From a fair trial made with these two Prostrains the Alms-house of this City during the last winter, ^{the} success was found to be greater with the soup of Luisinier's shape with Swain's Medicine; and although he denies there being any Erosive Sublimate in his preparation, we have ~~seen~~ seen several cases seen salivation ensue from the use of it. The circumstances attending salivation with Erosive Sublimate: differs from those with Calomel, and where noticed in each of the above cases. When the composition of the Panacea became so well known, it was tried to disguise it by adding the Gualtharia Procumbens and some other articles. The good success of quacks in the treatment of cases which have been termed venereal, with sassa-parilla and like articles, may be attributed to their having

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mistaken the disease, for we have frequently a mu-
cous disease, with ulcers, resembling secondary
syphilis, which grows worse under a treatment
with mercury, but yields to the more
mild remedies, as Sarsaparilla, Mezerion &c. -

Of Chronic Rheumatism.

This is evidently a disease of debility, and is often
a sequel of the acute species.

It is attended with weakness, a stiffness of the
joints and surrounding muscles, but the pain
is generally not so severe as in the acute. It is also
increased upon motion, but warmth relieves it.

It also has several varieties, and localises itself in
particular parts as the acute.

The fever attending it is seldom considerable, and
the temperature of the skin not much increased.
The pulse much affected, being generally
from seventy to eighty. Neither are the
sweats and tamification which accompanies the

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acute species. It is very often induced after the use of surgery, or whenever the system is debilitated from any cause upon the least exposure, particularly when the patient has had it previously. It frequently supervenes on an attack of Intermittent fever, and is also produced by exposure to cold, and the other causes of the acute species.

In the treatment of Chronic Rheumatism, blood-letting will be seldom be demanded, though much good may be derived at times from small bleedings, previous to and in conjunction with other remedies. It will at times be proper to open the bowels gently, though active purging will be improper, tending further to debilitate the system.

Stimulating medicines should be resorted to, after moderate evacuations, (if any be proper,) such as Opium, Camphor, Stramonium, bark, &c. The Eupatorium Perfoliatum, being possessed of tonic, cathartic, and stimulant power, will answer

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a good purpose. But the syrup of Quinine is perhaps one of the best remedies we can employ; particularly if we suspect it to be of a syphilitic nature; the patient may drink plentifully at the same time of decoction of Sarsaparilla, and avoid exposure to cold. Diaphoretics, as opium, Camphor, Ammoniac, and diuretics, among the best of which is the Colchicum, are also serviceable. We will derive more benefit in the form of the disease from local applications. Where there is much pain, or swelling and redness, cups, leeches, and blisters may be employed with benefit; or where we have a coldness and stiffness of the joints, with want of action in the skin, the parts affected should be well rubbed with Turpentine, or the volatile Liniment, and the joints kept warm with flannel coverings.

Dr. Chapman has discovered, that by applying a flannel roller tightly around the joint, is of decided utility, and in some cases will perform

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cure when every other remedy fails. The manner in which it acts is ~~chronic~~ Chronic Rheumatism, is sufficiently obvious: the vessels are here preternaturally extended with a loss of the power of contracting, and owing on their contents. By the pressure, the contents of the vessels are pressed forwards, their caliber is lessened, and relief is thus afforded; until by the support afforded, the vessels regain their natural tone.

The precipitated Sulphuret of Antimony has been recommended as peculiarly serviceable in the cure of Chronic Rheumatism. It is generally given in ~~union~~ union with Camphor, opium, or Guaiacum. Indeed the latter has been known to succeed when all other remedies have failed. The Volatile Tincture is the best form, but the ordinary manner of using it, viz: in the dose of a tea-spoonful two or three times a day, the medicine rendered entirely inert. It should be given in the

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of 2/3 or more on going to bed, followed by a glass
 of hot wine & why. In this mode of ex-
 hibition, the effect is a mild diaphoretic, and
 a suspension of pain.

The best effects may sometimes be derived
 from small doses of Turpentine.

Dr Chapman closes the Savin among the
 best remedies for this affection "where there is
 coldness of the surface and especially of the lower
 extremities, which are dry or covered with a clammy
 sweat."

Where there is a want of cutaneous action,
 with general laxitude and debility, the cold bath has
 salutary tendency, but it should only be employed
 when its good effects are evident. If oedema of the
 lower extremities occur, we should keep them elevated.

We frequently see, from some cause or other, at a
 time when we think our patients convalescent; the
 case is re-excited, and we have a recurrence of

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All the former symptoms: the pulse becomes more frequent and hard, and the blood exhibits an inflammatory appearance. This although generally thought to indicate a continuance of coarction, should not be too much relied upon; for several other circumstances may combine to retard the coagulation of the blood, upon the slowness of which the formation of the buffy coat will depend. Small and repeated bleeding will be necessary so long as the pulse remains hard, and patients strength will bear them.

When Chronic Rheumatism proves very obstinate, we may try the effects of putting the system under an alterative treatment of mercury, or we may even touch the joints, and the system should be kept under the spots of it for some time, as this will often succeed when other remedies have failed.

Where the disease leaves an enlargement of the

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joints, we must depend principally upon frictions and other local remedies. Some stimulating ointment may be employed as a friction.

The use of savin is said to be effectual where there are earthy depositions.

The diet, in common cases, should be nourishing and easy of digestion.

Sea-bathing, moderate exercise, and an occasional use of bitters and tonics should also be recommended. —

John Hughes

of Virginia.